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Bet You Missed It

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Bet You Missed It

Press Clippings — In the News — Carefully Selected by Your Crack Staff of News Sleuths

Column Editor: **Rosann Bazirjian** (Florida State University)

NB: We have varied the length of article abstracts in the past several issues of ATG. This issue contains a mix of lengths. We would like to hear your comments about the appropriate article abstract length. What do YOU like? — RB

Ottoman Archives
by **Twyla Racz**
(Eastern Michigan University)

Interest is growing and permission is easier to obtain in working with the Ottoman archives; but they remain difficult to use. Not only are they written in a different script and vocabulary than today, but no complete catalog exists and won't for years. See — **Finkel Andrew**, "Deciphering the Documents," **Civilization** (May-June, 1995), p. 24-25.

Those (Inter)Active French
by **Sandy Beehler**
(Cornell University)

This article describes the **Minitel** interactive information service system that has been in use in France for 12 years, providing 24,600 services from over 10,000 companies. Though technologically not state-of-the-art, it provides a model for how the general public is likely to use online services in the future — especially given the recent introduction of terminals that can read credit cards. Since 1991, practical services such as banking and tourism represent the highest proportion of **Minitel** use, and it has become a part of everyday life in France. See — "Clunk-Click Every Trip," **Economist**, August 19, 1995, p. 62.

Warning to Techies
by **Twyla Racz**
(Eastern Michigan University)

This is a very interesting look at some of the negative aspects of technology, with the warning that unless society is careful in its technological applications, it may lose its humanity. See — **Karaim, Reed**, "Technology and its Discontents," **Civilization**, May-June, 1995, p. 47-51.

The Cyberlibrarian Speaks
by **Pamela Rose**
(SUNY at Buffalo)

Cyberlibrarian Cynthia provides a list of Net sources where "traditional library resources" are stored. Some examples: **Project Gutenberg**'s books at wuecon.wustl.edu, and ***Statistical Abstract of the U.S.*** at http://www.census.gov:80/stat.abstract. See — **James-Catalano, Cynthia N.**, "The Virtual Library," Internet World, 6 (6) (June, 1995), p. 26.

The Yellow Kid
by **Twyla Racz**
(Eastern Michigan University)

Kanfer discusses the early newspaper comics, especially the popular "Yellow Kid" which gave yellow journalism its name. Later, however, the comics were judged too violent and a censorship code was imposed. See — **Kanfer, Stefan**, "From the Yellow Kid to Yellow Journalism," **Civilization**, May-June 1995, p. 32-37.

TV Sets and Chips
by **Twyla Racz**
(Eastern Michigan University)

Corry denounces the recent Senate votes to require the installation of computer chips into new TV sets, and to impose criminal penalties for "smut" on a network, and explores the reasons why it all came about. See — **Corry, John**, "Salty V-Chips." **American Spectator**, September, 1995, p. 42-43.

Battle Over Electronic Rights
by **Joan Loslo**
(University of Northern Iowa)

Who owns the rights to the different format versions which can now be created from a writer's work? Publishers are scrambling to acquire electronic rights as computers, CD-ROMs and the Internet (the new "multi-media") undercut the old rules of book publishing. See — **Jones, Malcolm, Jr.** with **Ray Sawhill**, "Who Owns the Word?" **Newsweek**, 126 (7) (August 14, 1995), p. 71-72.

Dollar's Rise
by **Sandy Beehler**
(Cornell University)

This is a brief article describing the status of the U.S. dollar in the world's currency markets. After 10 years of steady decline reaching an all-time low in April, 1995, the dollar's value against the yen and Deutschmark has risen, helped by recent strong intervention by the central banks. The author feels the dollar's future strength hinges on two factors — budget and trade deficits — as well as the continuing general health of the American economy. See — "Greenbacks Can Jump," **Economist** (August 19, 1995), p. 69.

Chips Power
by **Sandy Beehler**
(Cornell University)

In 1965, **Gordon Moore**, one of **Intel**'s founders, predicted that the computer chip would double in power every two years. To date, this has proven true, but manufacturers are now reaching the physical limitations of miniaturization using current methods and materials. Chip designers are exploring options — using other materials such as gallium arsenide, and other methods, such as optical computing — but for the time being we can expect two or three more generations of silicon chips before a switch has been made. See — "The End of the Line," **Economist** (July 15, 1995), p. 61.

Award Winners
by **Twyla Racz**
(Eastern Michigan University)

In this article, West reviews this year's Caldecott, Newbery and Andrew Carnegie Medal winners, and decides they "conform to a trend-conscious political correctitude." See — **West, Diana**, "P.C. Mommy Knows Best," **American Spectator**, July, 1995, p. 64-65.

Post Offices Come of Age
by **Sandy Beehler**
(Cornell University)

Besides the multimedia kiosks to be placed in post offices beginning next year, the postal services is also offering a range of e-mail security systems, including an electronic certificate of identity and an electronic postmarking service. See — "The Snail's Revenge," **Economist**, (August 5, 1995), p. 56.

Chips Shortage
by **Sandy Beehler**
(Cornell University)

Buying the new **Windows 95** software will also mean having to buy more memory to run it — but that may not be easy to do in the next year. This article predicts a shortage in 4-megabit chips, which are the most popular, due to the lack of new factories to produce the chips and an over investment in production of 16-megabit chips that are too large and expensive for most consumers. Eventually the larger chips will overtake the market but will bring profits only to those semiconductor companies that produce the best design in terms of miniaturization and flexibility of use. See — "Semi-conductors — Remind Me How To Make Money," **Economist** (August 26, 1995), p. 55.

OTA On the Line
by **Sandy Beehler**
(Cornell University)

The subject of this article is the proposal by Congress to cut funding for the **Office of Technology Assessment**, which would effectively abolish it. The OTA is a bipartisan agency that has been producing reports on technology proposals being considered by Congress since 1974, and it has been deemed worthy of imitation by other governments. The fact that it takes a non-political approach in its evaluation of technology has earned it few friends to speak up for it during the current crisis. The author concludes that some things about the OTA may need fixing, but it is an agency worth keeping around. See — "Reassessment With Extreme Prejudice," **Economist**, (August 12, 1995), p. 65.

The Internet in Court
by **Phil Dankert**
(Cornell University)

In 15 states, legislation has either been introduced or, in the case of 5, bills have been signed into law which are designed to restrict what can be transmitted on computer networks. While legal experts believe that most of these laws will eventually be overturned by the courts, there is still great concern about their potential impact on the academic community. Restrictions on what people can say could very well eliminate the Internet's value as an academic tool. See — **Wilson, David L.**, "Restricting the Networks," **Chronicle of Higher Education**, June 30, 1995, p. A17, A19.

What is Fair Use
by **Phil Dankert**
(Cornell University)

The author of this "Point of View" column suggests that what is now "most urgently needed is for faculty members and academic administrators to become better informed about the role that fair use ... plays in supporting higher education." He is commenting on the "Preliminary Report of the Working Group on Intellectual Property" which was released in July, 1994, and on some of the reasons why representatives of libraries and educational organizations have reacted with alarm to its major recommendations. See — **Frazier, Kenneth**, "Protecting Copyright and Preserving Fair Use in the Electronic Future," **Chronicle of Higher Education**, June 30, 1995, p. A40.

Web Privacy
by **Phil Dankert**
(Cornell University)

Should the fact that most World Wide Web sites store a list of the addresses of all the computers that have visited them be a concern to users of the Internet? Opinions differ over whether such records threaten the privacy of Web users. As one individual noted, "there's a lot more information about people held by credit-card databases than currently exists in cyberspace." At this point technological solutions are being worked on that will allow for the collection of information while, at the same time, preserving the privacy of users. See — **Wilson, David L.**, "The Network has Eyes," **Chronicle of Higher Education**, (July 21, 1995), p. A17-A18.

Well, Which Is It, The Chicken or the Egg?
by **Rick Heldrich**
(College of Charleston)

You may not think it is a serious question, but scientists do. In fact, a collection of scientists gathered at a conference to discuss one question: was it the chicken or the egg? Of course, scientists do not talk about chickens and eggs like that, but the point of the discussion was pretty close. DNA, the polymer of life, turns in a clockwise direction, to the right, forming the famous a-helix. Amino acids, the building blocks of proteins, twist in a counterclockwise direction, to the left. Sugar molecules, which are attached to the amino acids in DNA, twist to the right. Most scientists associate the peculiar twisting of DNA, carbohydrates and amino acids to the peculiarity of life. All living things operate by using DNA polymers that twist, made up of amino acids and sugars that also twist.

You might think that the concept of twisting is abstract and irrelevant to you. Think again, oh twisted ones. (First there was Oliver Twist, and then there was you?) The property of twisting in one direction or the other is before you. It is in your hands. Really!

Compare your left hand to your right hand. They look the same except that they "twist" in opposite directions. Try as you might, you cannot place one hand on the other so that they are a perfect match, both palms down and both thumbs to the same side. While not an exact match, compare your right (or left) hand to a friend's right hand (or left hand). You can place two different right hands (or left hands) so both palms are down and thumbs point the same way.

The twisting of molecules, like the twisting of hands, causes unique behavior. To see that this is true, offer your left hand to someone that is right-handed the next time you shake hands. Right hands can shake right hands, but they have a hard go of it with left hands. Your right hand and your left hand have the same property of twisting talked about for DNA, amino acids and sugar. Molecules, like hands, can be made to twist in two different directions. In fact, the normal expectation when making molecules, is the same as when making hands. For every right-handed object you make, you expect to make a left-handed object. How many people do you know who really do have two left hands? Molecules are available that twist both ways, but living systems selectively utilize only molecules that twist in one way.

So what is the Big Question? "Which came first, life (the chicken) or the selective use of twisting molecules (the egg)?" The question was debated but not definitively answered. A few participants argued that the twisting molecules were introduced from extraterrestrial sources. If that is the origin of twisting on earth, the central question remains, where did the extraterrestrial building blocks come from? A planet where there was life? Is there a planet where life forms use DNA, the polymer of life, that turns in a counterclockwise direction, to the left made from amino acids that twist in a clockwise direction and sugar molecules that twist to the left? Are people on that planet "lefties" as a norm? The search continues. See — "Getting All Turned Around Over the Origins of Life on Earth," by **Jon Cohen, Science**, vol 267, 1265-66 March 3, 1995.

Documents Categorization
by **Pamela Rose**
(SUNY at Buffalo)

Describes an innovative automated technique to compare documents and categorize them by content in a purely mathematical way rather than using key words or phrases, a method which works in any language. See — **Damashek, Marc**, "Gauging Similarity With N-Grams: Language-Independent Categorization of Text," **Science**, 267 (February 10, 1995), p. 843-848.

Tuition Reimbursement On the Line
by **Pamela Rose**
(SUNY at Buffalo)

The Clinton Administration via OMB is proposing to restrict tuition reimbursement to spouses and children of faculty as part of a larger package of rule changes to force schools to shoulder a larger share of "indirect costs." See — **Roush, Wade**, "New Faculty May Lose Family Tuition Help," **Science**, 269 (July 14, 1995), p. 158.

One Giant Leap for Mankind
by **Pamela Rose**
(SUNY at Buffalo)

Researchers are working on new storage technologies based on extremely small units combining elements from a high-resolution optical microscope and a high-speed magnetic disc drive, able to read and write data at 8 million bits per second, a giant leap over conventional CD-ROMs. See — **Service, Robert E.**, "Pushing the Data Storage Envelope," **Science**, 269 (July 21, 1995), p. 299-300.

New Journal Emerges
by **Pamela Rose**
(SUNY at Buffalo)

Penn State materials scientist **Rustum Roy** is starting a new journal, ***Innovations in Materials Research***, to allow publication without the hassle and delay of the independent scientific ("peer") review. See — **Kaiser, Jocelyn**, "Results Without the Review" in Random Samples Section, **Science**, 269 (July 21, 1995), p. 205.

Satellite Power
by **Sandy Beehler**
(Cornell University)

One of the problems with tapping the rich resources of the World Wide Web is the time it takes to download information once you find it. The networks owned by television cable companies have the potential to handle information transfer faster, but these networks are not yet capable of allowing two-way connections. This article discusses the **DirecPC** satellite service offered by **Hughes Network Systems** — a service that already can transfer data at a rate of 400,000 bits a second, and aims to increase the rate to 2m bits in the near future. Hughes hopes to market its services not only to individuals but to commercial customers. It has already signed a contract with IBM. See — "Data Communications — Deluged," **Economist** (July 22, 1995), p. 77.

Unregulated World
by **Rosann Bazirjian**
(Florida State University)

This article discusses possible scenarios that might take place if Congress tosses out the antiquated Communications Act of 1934. Should that happen, barriers dividing our Baby Bells and cable companies would be torn down. The author hypothesizes what might happen to the Baby Bells, cable companies, broadcasters and programmers, predicting who will be the winners and losers. See — **Kupfer, Andrew**, "How You Can Pick the Winners in the New Communications War'" **Fortune** 132 (2) (July 24, 1995), p. 159-160.

Storing Sound
by **Sandy Beehler**
(Cornell University)

Ken Thompson, the man who invented the Unix operating system, is now devoting his spare time to developing a way to compress sound so that it can be accessed, downloaded and stored on a PC. He has already gathered a huge database of recorded sounds — click on any title and the music begins to play. The work of Thompson and others has caused some panic among music distributors and garnered criticism from hardcore audiophiles who claim compression ruins the quality of the original sound. See — "Music on Demand," **Wired** (August, 1995), p. 82.

Web-Based Encyclopedia Available
by **Sandy Beehler**
(Cornell University)

The Web-based edition of the ***Encyclopedia Britannica***, called **Britannica Online**, is now available to colleges and universities and will soon be accessible to individuals. There are obvious advantages: automated search capability, 24-hour availability, and for the publisher a potentially wider audience for its product which it hopes will carry the company into the 21st century. See — "***Encyclopedia Britannica*** Online," **Wired**, (August 1995), p. 72.

Finance and Research in Conflict
by **Pamela Rose**
(SUNY at Buffalo

NIH or NSF funded researchers will soon both determine what constitutes financial interests and research conflict and what to do about it, under new rules set by PHS. See — **Mervis, Jeffrey**, "Final Rules Put Universities in Charge," **Science**, 269 (July 21, 1995), p. 294.

Tribute
by **Twyla Racz**
(Eastern Michigan University)

This is a tribute to **Norman Podhoretz** both for his writing and for his editing. Mr. Podhoretz recently retired after 35 years as editor of ***Commentary***. See — **Ferguson, Andrew**, "Making It Final," **American Spectator**, July, 1995, p. 44-45.